

Development and Planning of Professional Assistance in Germany

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Issues

1. Legal backgrounds of professional assistance planning in Germany
2. Implementation of assistance planning in the youth welfare system
3. Concepts & Practice
4. Research & Evaluation
5. Challenges
6. “Sozialpädagogische Diagnose” (social diagnosis)

Backgrounds

New child and youth welfare act

Volume VIII of the German Social Code (Child and Youth Services Act = KJHG)

Launched 1990

§ 36: “paradigm shift” regarding professional assistance

- consideration of the individual needs as well as the planning of assistance is a central issue
- Decision-making by cooperation of several experts is necessary
- Participation of parents and children in decision making is regulated by law

Shift from a specialist/indication-model to negotiation-model

Backgrounds

Issues of § 36:

- Expert-team-decision: Decision on the form of assistance in cooperation with several specialist (social worker-youth welfare office, other specialist if needed)
- specialists (youth welfare office) should develop an assistance plan (Hilfeplan) together with parents, children, adolescent and social service provider
- it should include: declarative statement of the needs (need of educational support), form of the provided assistance and details about the services needed
- they should regularly review if the assistance is appropriate and necessary

Backgrounds

Planning of assistance not in all cases but necessary if:

Lack of education, welfare/development of the child/teenager isn't ensured

Children/adolescent are in need of help, most likely an intensive and long-lasting assistance is necessary (educational assistance "Hilfen zur Erziehung") ...

Backgrounds

Child and Youth Welfare Act offers different forms of “educational assistance” (Hilfen zur Erziehung) for children/adolescent in need:

Foster Care

Residential Care

social and pedagogical family assistance

Day groups

Social group work

educational assistance

....

But other forms are possible:

Nature and extent of the assistance should be according to the individual needs/requirements

Backgrounds

Keywords § 36:

- **Participation** of clients in decision-making processes
- **Parents are entitled** to help and support
- **Cooperation of specialists** in decision making process
- assistance should be according to the **individual needs/requirements** (no indication-based decisions)
- Assistance plan is based on **negotiation process** between clients and specialists (**trusting working relationship**)
- **right of the clients to choose** the service provider
- **Involvement of NGO** (private providers) in decision making processes
- Avoidance of long lasting **separation of the child from his or her parents** (**avoiding statutory interventions**)

Backgrounds

German social pedagogy tradition

- New professionals since 1970 “Sozialpädagoge/Sozialarbeiter FH”: reform era 1970-1990 (invention of new forms of assistance and parental support in the youth welfare system and cooperation with clients, priority of ambulant assistance)
 - modern social pedagogy in Germany had coined the label of life-world orientation (Lebensweltorientierung) to demand forms of social work, that take the way, clients make sense of their everyday life as the most important starting point of professional work
 - Youth welfare more service orientated
- UN-Children rights convention!!!

Implementation

Big challenge for youth welfare offices in Germany:

- Structural challenge: time resources (team conferences), change of decision making routines, transparency of the objectives
- Challenge for professionals: Participation of clients and social service providers on decision making processes, definition/specification and review of objectives, documentation of decision making process (written assistance plan), case-management more contract orientated

Implementation has taken more than 10 years!!!

Implementation

First guidelines 1994 by the “Deutscher Verein” and “Institut für Soziale Arbeit” :

Strong emphasis on negotiation process between social workers and clients and recognition of their subject status

Six phase model!

Diagnoses play a secondary role!

Implementation

Six phase model (Deutscher Verein 1994):

- Counselling parents (and adolescent), description of the life/educational situation from the parents and children/adolescent point of view
- Team consultation (only social worker of youth welfare office): first professional assessment: What is the problem? What can we suggest?
- Discussion with parents/adolescent/children on the professional's assessment and suggestions
- Again team consultation: decision about the form of assessment
- Conference clients and social workers (from youth welfare offices, if necessary social service provider): development of the assistance plan
- Follow up Conference (e.g. after 6 month): review and updating assistance plan

Implementation

Hot professional discussion during 1990th:

Diagnosis versus negotiation?

Background: long tradition of socio-psychological diagnosis in German youth welfare system, in some German Länder obligatory before 1990!

- Pro diagnosis: decision for assistance is an juridical-administrative act that needs coherent objective reasons
- Contra Diagnosis: Assessment of educational needs is an indeterminate legal concept and thus a matter of negotiation, diagnosis can only support decision making, important is the documentation of the decision making process

Meanwhile both in the practice: negotiation and diagnosis, diagnosis particular in cases on suspicion of danger to the welfare of children (child neglect)

Concepts & Practice

Meanwhile most welfare offices have developed their regulations on assessment planning (most are available via internet)

Different routines but mostly following the guidelines from Deutsche Verein/ISA

Concepts & Practice

The stages of the assistance planning procedure:

1. Informal consultation phase:

setting: social worker youth welf. office, parents (mostly mothers!) and child (sometimes)

- counselling: What does professional assistance mean? Procedures etc.

- clarification: What are your problems? Is there a chance to solve them without professional assistance? If not: What is needed?

- summing up (often as a report): clients understanding of problems and why is professional assistance needed

Concepts & Practice

2. Clearing

Precondition: formal application for professional assistance by parents

Different routines/forms:

a) expert orientated: problem analyses by the responsible social worker (if nec. in cooperation with specialists, or with help of social worker team);
report: client's understanding/professional's understanding of problems, other expert opinions, possible offers of support (discussion with clients if necessary)

b) team and negotiation orientated: social pedagogy analyses (draft) by the responsible social worker (description of the life situation, of family history and network, wishes of the clients);
discussion of the report in expert team: problem analyses/prof. assessment, proposals for possible form of assistance;
resp. social worker discuss the problem analyses and proposals with client;
again discussion /assessment in expert team (if necessary again discussion with clients);
two reports: process documentation, problem analyses (view of experts, view of clients, resources, clients wishes, educational needs etc.)

Concepts & Practice

3. Assistance –plan-conference (“Hilfeplankonferenz”), concretisation and contracting

Different routines/forms:

a)Kassel:

- conference of the regional public social service team social worker, heads of department, clients); decision (voting) of the form of assistance (only professionals);
- afterwards, meeting (“Hilfeplangespräch”) resp. social worker, clients and representatives from social services provider: development of a preliminary assistance plan (reasons for the form of assistance, concrete objectives and how to reach them, time and finance issues);
- After 3 month follow up meeting : adoption of the final version

Formal decision: regional social service team (but veto by the directorate)

Documents of “Hilfeplan”: problem analyses, conference protocol , assistance plan

Concepts & Practice

3. Assistance –plan-conference
 (“Hilfeplankonferenz”), concretisation and
 contracting

Different routines/forms:

b) Land Brandenburg

- conference (only resp. social worker, clients and representative social service provider); discussion, summing up: reasons for assistance, form and objectives, time period; contracting

Documents (Hilfeplan): social pedagogic analysis, conference protocol, assistance plan

Concepts & Practice

3. Assistance –plan-conference (“Hilfeplankonferenz”),
concretisation and contracting

Different routines/forms:

c) Hamburg

- conference (two social workers and clients); discussion, summing up (protocol): form and objectives of assistance , controversial issues

- formal meeting (“Hilfeplangespräch”) resp. social worker, clients and representatives from social services provider: concretisation of assistance plan, contracting

Formal decision: resp. social worker

Documents (“Hilfeplan”): problem analyses, conference protocol, assistance plan

Concepts & Practice

4. Follow-up/ update of the assistance plan:

In general every half year:

Formal meeting (“Hilfeplangespräch”) resp. social worker, clients and representatives from social services provider: evaluation, revising objectives (What has been reached?), development of new objectives (if necessary), signing up a follow up plan.

Concepts & Practice

German federal model projects and programmes

- Modellprogramm Fortentwicklung des Hilfeplanverfahrens (federal programme for further development of assistance planning 2002-2007)/ „Hilfeplanung als Kontraktmanagement“ (2002-2005) Assistance planning as contract management (Schrappner/Pies 2003; Schrappner 2005): e.g. implementation of methods to strengthen the cooperation between youth welfare office and private social service providers (collegial case advice approach)
- INTEGRA: assistance planning related to social environments, strengthen public/private partnership/cooperation

Research & Evaluation

Several research projects on assistance planning:

Schrapper/Pies 2003; Schrapper 2005; Gragert et al/DJI 2005; ISA-Oranienburg 1998; Becker 1999a; Becker 1999b; Merchel 1998; Pluto 2007):

- Decision-making too much orientated an already existing community-based services instead of individual tailored solutions (Schrapper/Pies 2003 p. 66)
- Influence of financial issues (Schrapper/Pies 2003 p. 51)
- Objectives often too vague, plan sometimes little more than a formality (Schrapper/Pies 2003, p. 50)
- Influence of parents on decision-making ok, but influence of children is weak (Schrapper/Pies 2003, p. 50; Pluto 2007, p. 141 ff; Gragert et al 2005, p. 65 f) ...

Research & Evaluation

- Parents agree on the objects, but not identified with them: main reason why assistance fail (Schrapper/Pies 2003, p. 66)
- Assistance planning in most youth welfare offices is managed well, but regulations are missing to support the cooperation between youth welfare office and private service provider (Schrapper/Pies 2003, S. 65)
- Termination/ending of the assistance is not well regulated (Schrapper/Pies 2003, p. 46)
- Assistance planning with migrants is a problem: translators are often missing (Gragert u.a. 2005, p. 70 f)

Challenges

Impact of German child protection act (launched 2011):

Increasing number of statutory intervention/taken into custody: 2004: 26 000 cases ... 2011: 38 500 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2013, S. 37)

Decision-making by check lists?

Increase of enforcement contexts of parents

Participation of parents is difficult in enforcement contexts, no reliable cooperation between parents and professionals

Sozialpädagogische Diagnose

Since 1990: Sozialpädagogische Diagnose

Development of diagnosis tools based on research (in cooperation researchers with Fice Germany and social services)

- life-world orientation
- Hermeneutic approach
- Professional diagnosis of social workers

Sozialpädagogische Diagnose

Steps of diagnosis

1. Semi-structured interviews with adolescent and parents
2. Summing up the interviews in specific categories by expert team (social workers). Interpretation of subjective life/conflict themes. Interpretation of developmental tasks and suggestions for support.
3. Critical review of the expert interpretation by clients. Summing up: What are the life/ conflict themes? Which recourses can be mobilized? What are the issues and objectives of the assistance ?
4. Feed back to expert team.

Diagnosis is subject of the assistance -plan-conference (ideal), but starting point of the internal assistance planning (social service provider)

Conclusion

- **Assistance plan leads in about 60-70 % to trusting working relationship between clients and social workers**
- **More transparency of the assistance process**
- **Less statutory interventions in families**
- **But: Does the professional assistance planning make the quality of help better?**
- **Where are the fathers?**